

THE AUSTRALIAN ANABAPTIST
Supplement 10

A Good Friday Message

Jesus' Steadfast Journey to Jerusalem

Transcribed from a message by:

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For A Conservative Mennonite Perspective

A Good Friday Message

Jesus' Steadfast Journey to Jerusalem

We count it a privilege to worship with the saints this morning and with our brother would give you an invitation to worship with us in Washington County as you have opportunity.

This morning we greet you in the name of Jesus whom, as Paul writes, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, (still further) and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. *Philippians 2:6-9*.

And in light of what our brother has already brought to our attention we sing sometimes, Oh Master let me walk with thee in lowly paths of service free. We go on through that song and conclude by saying, With Thee oh Master let me live.

When we are born again and commit our life to Christ, when we promise to serve Him, we pray that we might walk with Jesus and walk with Him that we could learn of Him, when we pray that Jesus would teach us how to live, that Jesus would convey that to us so that we could share His burden and His vision what are we asking for.

Remember Jesus was the one who being God and rightly equal with God humbled Himself and became obedient unto death. And Paul offers that commentary on the life and mission of Christ let this mind be in you. *(Philippians 2:5)*.

When we commit ourselves to serving Christ we are committing ourselves to die for Him and though the message focuses on Christ let's not allow that thought to get very far away from us.

This morning is Good Friday and we come right in the centre of what we refer to sometimes as the Easter season. Last Sunday we knew as Palm Sunday, the time that we remember Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem and this coming Sunday is Easter and subconsciously I think we can compartmentalize our thoughts in relation to the final event in Jesus life.

We come to this time of year, and it is also communion season for many of us, and as the time comes we observe Palm Sunday, we observe Good Friday, and then Sunday we look forward to commemorating Easter and then we lay it aside, not entirely but subconsciously.

This morning's message however rather than focusing first of all or primarily on the death of Christ and His resurrection, this morning's message is an opportunity and a challenge to us to back up a step and look at the long uphill climb that Jesus walked to reach Jerusalem. That was true for Jesus physically.

The city of Jerusalem was situated on a hill and the temple in particular and the ground from Jerusalem dropped hundreds of feet down into the Jordan River Valley so that the pilgrims coming to Jerusalem for that Passover feast climbed upward and upward and upward and finally they with round the bend and there was the city of Jerusalem and the Temple in all its glory.

I understand that portions of the temple were gilded with gold so that when the sun came up it shone like a lamp on that side of Jerusalem and the temple wrought awe in the minds and hearts of any loyal Jew who saw it.

Well that uphill climb for Jesus was physical but it also typifies Jesus steadfast journey towards Jerusalem.

A long uphill climb not only in the physical sense but very much as it appeared to Jesus as He was not only the Son of man but also the Son of God.

You may turn with me now to Luke chapter 9; we take our text from verse 51.

Luke 9:51: And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem.

The question I would entertain and I invite you to entertain with me:
What was it that brought Jesus to Jerusalem?
What motivated Him, what impelled Him, what enabled Him?

Sometimes we find ourselves, maybe we are travelling and suddenly we hit an icy stretch of road, the vehicle swerves out of control, maybe it hasn't happened to us, maybe we know someone else that experienced this, and we are powerless to prevent the disaster that seems imminent.

In similar vein a worldly person will refer sometimes to fate, the implication being that circumstances outside their control brought them to where they were.

Well Jesus was not behind the wheel of a vehicle that swerved out of control and neither did He move to Jerusalem with a fatalistic resignation that Thomas expressed on one occasion when he said: Let us also go that we may die with him. *John 11:16*.

No, not Jesus.

The 3½ years of Jesus public ministry laid the foundation for one event. We could say that the uphill climb toward Jerusalem began when Jesus began His public ministry, maybe even before that, and particularly in the last weeks and months of Jesus ministry He repeatedly tried to help His disciples to understand what was before them and that purposefulness becomes even more evident when we consider the numerous obstacles that lay in Jesus' path to Jerusalem and I would like to think about them first of all in the message.

Thinking about Jesus steadfast journey to Jerusalem we want to understand that Jesus journey to Jerusalem was a purposeful journey and not one of desperate resistance.

There were obstacles in the way that would have made it easier for Him to turn aside or to stop short then continue to the end.

What were the obstacles?

The first one I note in verses 52 to 54 where Jesus having set His face to Jerusalem sent messengers before His face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for Him. And they did not receive Him, because his face was as though He would go to Jerusalem.

And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did? *Luke 9:52-54*.

First obstacle that I see here in the path of Jesus was the potential of personal insults.

The Samaritans you may recall were the descendants of the mixed multitudes that the King of Assyria brought in to people the land of Israel when he carried the Israelites captive and they developed a pseudo-Judaism, by that I mean it was a form of Judaism that was very much warped and mixed with heathen culture and as that developed the Samaritans became antagonists and rivals of the Jews.

You may recall the woman of Sychar said to Jesus on an earlier occasion that the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans, *John 4:9*, and the contrary was also true, the Samaritans had no dealings with the Jews.

In the interval between the Old and New Testaments the Samaritans built a rival temple to the Temple of Jerusalem and so when a man at this stage or at this season was set to go to Jerusalem it was evident that he was headed there to observe the Passover and these Samaritan people as I understand it laid out the bait, as it were, and set the stage for a scrap with the Jews.

But Jesus had not come to scrap with the Samaritans, Jesus had come to save the Samaritans and so that obstacle that they made in His path Jesus had no time for.

Another personal insult that Jesus faced in this context came from His disciples who proposed that they bring fire down from heaven; I believe they thought they were being loyal to Jesus. In reality they were betraying their own revengeful ambitious spirit.

Verse 46: There arose a reasoning among them who should be greatest (*Luke 9:46*) and with that still simmering in the background what may have seen on the surface to be an affront to Jesus they took as a personal affront and their ambitious revengeful spirit was an insult to Jesus nature of mercy and forgiveness.

But again Jesus would not be swerved by that obstacle. Instead of allowing Himself to be flattered or swept up in their emotions of retaliation Jesus

laid bare their carnal spirit, He rebuked their vindictiveness and verse 56 concludes they went on, they went to another village (*Luke 9:56*). The obstacle did not stop Jesus.

The second obstacle that lay in Jesus pathway was the demands of self sacrifice that He needed to face.

Verse 57: And it came to pass that as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee wither soever thou goest. And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. *Luke 9:57-58*.

And we often as we consider these verses think about how it challenges us and rightly so, but what did Jesus mean when He said that Son of man has not where to lay his head?

Turn back to verse 10 of this chapter as an example of what this meant to Jesus.

In verse 10 Jesus invited His disciples to go with Him into a desert place apart for a while, and we need to compare this account with the parallel accounts in Matthew and Mark to get the full picture.

Several things that were in focus here in the early verses of Luke nine are Jesus had sent the twelve forth two by two to preach and to heal and I'm not sure how much time elapsed but in verse 10 we have them coming back again and the disciples needed time with Jesus to report on what they had done and what they had preached and what they had faced and whom they had healed and where they had been.

From the account in Matthew chapter 14, it is just mentioned here in Luke nine, but *Matthew 14* indicates that Jesus and His disciples in the same setting received news of John the Baptist's death and John the Baptist was very dear to Jesus and so Jesus and His disciples were grieving over the news of John the Baptist's death and they needed some time alone.

But in spite of all that, in the midst of all that *Mark 6:36* tells us that the people, the multitude followed Jesus, they thronged Him and His disciples to the point that they did not even have time to eat and in that context alone were very much needing time apart to sort out their thoughts in relation to John the Baptist and their own ministry Jesus said: Come apart awhile. And so they did.

But the multitudes who were following Jesus guessed where He was going, some of them followed Him, some of them outran Him so when they got to their private retreat apart from the mob and the multitude for a while there was a group of people already waiting for them. A group of people that had needs, a group of people to whom Jesus ministered, He healed, He talked, He preached, He saw them as sheep not having a Shepherd.

He saw them as a group of people who even needed to be fed and so He fed them. Remember this was Jesus who did not have time even to eat.

I do not know how much time elapsed, I get the impression that perhaps Jesus and His disciples had left early in the morning to go apart, however that was, the day stretched on and when the people were finally fed and sent away it was evening time and Jesus sent His disciples away and then finally Jesus could go home and take a hot shower and crawl into bed. No.

Matthew 14:23 says: And when he had sent the multitude away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray.

Why did He need to go into a mountain to pray?

In order to face the demands of tomorrow.

And so when Jesus said here in *Luke 9:5*) that the Son of man hath not were to lay his head He was not only implying the poverty that He faced but He was implying the fact that as the Son of man He had nothing, no possessions, no time, no resources to call His own.

The demands of self sacrifice stood as a challenge to Jesus in His journey to Jerusalem.

Another challenge and another obstacle that Jesus faced was physical and social relationships.

Verse 59, And he said to another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. *Luke 9:59*.

The Old Testament demanded that individuals honour their father and mother, I don't know whether this man's father had just died or not or whether he was saying that his father was getting up in years and could I wait till I have buried my father to come and follow you Jesus?

Jesus said to him: Let the dead bury their dead, but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. *Luke 9:60*.

That sounds a little bit harsh. Did Jesus know what He was talking about?

Well it could have seemed that Jesus course ran counter to human relations the way that He outlined for other people set them at odds with what they understood to be the Law, Jesus knew something about that too.

The Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary before Jesus was born and implied that it was a great honour to be the mother of the Son of God but when he, Jesus, was only eight days old an old man full of insight and the Spirit of God told her that in light of this, her son, a sword would pierce through her soul. Something about Jesus was going to sever human relationships. (*Luke 2: 25-35*)

His brothers did not believe in Him, at one point they mockingly challenged Him to produce some of the miracles like He had been doing elsewhere. Something about Jesus seemingly set Him at odds with normal human relationships and even filial obligations.

But Jesus both taught and demonstrated that to them that His Father's will and purpose was more important to Him than any earthly relationships.

In Matthew 12 there were a multitude of people around Jesus in the house where He was and word came to Him that his mother and brothers were outside, they wanted to talk to Him and He said: Who is my mother, and who are my brethren? And He looked around and He said: Those who do the will of my Father these are my mother and sister and brethren. (*Matthew 12:46-50*)

And in *Luke 14:26* Jesus said if any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea and his own life also he cannot be my disciple.

Why?

Because that was the path that Jesus took. It was the path that He needed to take I should say if He was going to reach Jerusalem.

The fourth obstacle that lay in Jesus path is suggested in verses 61 and 62 and perhaps this overshadows or includes them all: –

The obstacle of divided loyalty.

Another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God. *Luke 9:61-62.*

Jesus had put His hand to the plough.

And Luke 2, which we are going to look at this afternoon, Jesus first recorded words in the gospel account were, Wist ye not I must be about my Father's business, *Luke 2:49*. He had put his hand to the plough.

And our text verse (*Luke 9:51*) here further emphasizes the fact that Jesus put His hands to the plough, He steadfastly set His face to go up to Jerusalem.

Did Jesus ever face the temptation to look back?

In the wilderness Jesus faced temptation for 40 days and nights and I tend to think that the devil tempted Jesus in areas that he knew would test Jesus most severely and one of the things that he dangled before Jesus was the opportunity to be Lord of the kings of the earth and the nations and the people of the earth.

Why did he dangle that before Him? (*Luke 4:1-13*).

Did Jesus face the temptation to look back?

When the people on another occasion proposed to make Him King by force Jesus not only slipped away from them but He also went apart into the mountain to pray, why did He go into a mountain to pray? *John 6:15*.

Did Jesus ever face the temptation to look back?

On another occasion in *Luke 12:50* Jesus said I have a baptism to be baptised with and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!

That word straitened means restricted on both sides.

Did Jesus face the temptation having put His hand to the plough look back?

And why was it that in the garden of Gethsemane he sweated as it were great drops of blood? *Luke 22:44*.

Was it not because the human urge to protect self and to preserve life was real to Him and was coupled with the understanding that He had ability to call down more than 12 legions of angels to deliver Him. *Matthew 26:53*.

Did Jesus face the temptation to look back? I think He did.

We gathered that Jesus did not drift into Jerusalem on the tide of least resistance. When the time has come that He should be received up He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem.

That journey was one continual uphill climb, one continual conflict between the call of the Father and the call of the flesh and not once did Jesus waver.

So we cannot say that Jesus drifted into Jerusalem.

How did Jesus get into Jerusalem? What awaited Jesus in Jerusalem?

Sometimes we have a prospect before us, perhaps we are anticipating a visit with friends or maybe it is a service such as we have here and because of the desirableness and the prospect before us we lay everything else aside. Perhaps we short-change our chores or we turn down some other invitations in order to make that appointment.

Was that the way it was with Jesus? Is that how He got to Jerusalem?

This morning I mentioned that the Jerusalem was on a hill but I would like to take us to a higher hill, the Hill of retrospect.

And from our vantage point we can look back and see what it was that awaited Jesus in Jerusalem.

Was it the prospect before Him at Jerusalem that drew Him there? Let's look.

Here in Luke nine verse 22 it says: The son of man must suffer many things and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be slain, and be raised the third day. *Luke 9:22.*

Luke 18:31: Then he took unto him the 12 and said unto them, Behold we go to Jerusalem and all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished. For he shall be delivered unto the Gentiles, and shall be mocked, and spitefully and treated and spitted on: And they shall scourge him, and put him to death: and the third day he shall rise again. *Luke 18: 31-33.*

What was it that awaited Jesus at Jerusalem as we look back?

I would sum it up in four words - the first word is **Rejection.**

Jesus went about his countrymen healing them, administering to their needs, feeding them, teaching them, I believe it is in the book of Acts that one of the Apostles said that He went about doing good (*Acts 10:38*).

But the chief priests and scribes also heard Jesus, saw Jesus, felt Jesus lay bare their greed, their hypocrisy, their pride and rather than repent and surrender themselves they rejected Jesus' teaching, they ascribed His miracles to the power of the devil and they plotted to kill Him – they rejected Him.

And if that rejection was not enough in the hour of Jesus' trial when He needed then the most His own disciples either forsook Him or denied Him. What awaited Jesus at Jerusalem? Rejection.

Another thing that awaited Jesus at Jerusalem was **Betrayal**.

Judas was one of those who had walked with Jesus, who had observed His miracles, had heard His teaching, had seen demonstrated over and over again the goodness the graciousness and the mercy of Jesus and Judas out of petty greed went, when they reached Jerusalem, to sell Him for the price of a slave, for a few coins. And when the time came to give Jesus away he would betray Him with a kiss.

That is what awaited Jesus had to Jerusalem.

Another thing that awaited Jesus at Jerusalem was **Suffering**.

On the night of His betrayal and arrest they took Him to Caiaphas' house, I'm speaking in the past; we should think about in the future about what awaited Jesus at Jerusalem.

They would arrest Him in the dark of the night, why was it night, they would take into Caiaphas' house and they would blindfold Him and they would take turns slapping Him on the face and hitting Him.

I suspect His nose bled for after a while.

And they would say prophesy who it is that hits you! And coming up they would unleash their spite that they had accumulated over three years of rejection and hardening of the hearts and they would spit in His face.

And when morning would come they would take Him to Pilate and as the morning progressed Pilate would order Him to be scourged, not the scourging of the Jews 40 stripes save one, but scourging by the Roman standards it was called the halfway death. Scourging was not accompanied by any other form of punishment normally.

Roman scourging involved stripping a man of his clothes and bending him over a three point high pillar and binding his hands on the other side and then they would take a leather whip with steel and bone embedded in the ends of the thongs and they would beat him short of death. Lay open his back until the bones showed, beat him till he went unconscious and then revived him up again with cold water so that his back was just one burning open wound.

That's what they would do to Jesus and then without dressing His wounds the soldiers would drape a garish robe over His shoulders, they would thrust a reed into His hand in the form of a Sceptre, they would take thorns and create a crown and put it on His head and then they would mockingly bow the knee, they would grab the reed and beat Him on the head so that the thorns would pierce the skin on His head.

That is what awaited Jesus at Jerusalem.

And then if that was not enough beyond the suffering lay the crucifixion itself. **Crucifixion and Death**

After 12 or more hours of torture and misuse and abuse to the point that Jesus is so weak that He could not as was normally expected carry His own cross they led Him out to Calvary and there they would lay Him down on the cross piece of His cross, stretch out His arms and drive a nail through each of His hands.

Then they would lift Him up hanging from those nails that held Him on the cross and they would bend His legs up and nail His feet onto the upright of the cross and there He was to die.

Remember His back is still bleeding, His head is still bleeding and now He is hanging. Remember as they crucified Him the weight of the body would hang down so that the arms formed a "V" and there they would hang.

In that position the shoulders grow cramped and the chest muscles contracted so that they could not breathe and so with painful difficulty they would raise themselves up straighten the legs to take the stress of their upper torso and now they could breath but now pain in the feet was so great that they could not bear it and so little by little the body would sag down again.

And all the time the flies and the insects drawn by the blood would swarm around Him and no way to relieve Himself.

And the scribes and Pharisees are standing there taunting Him until He died.

That is what awaited Jesus at Jerusalem.

And so again we look at ourselves and we know how it is in a time of difficulty and suffering we say: If only I had known back there what I was going to get into I would have done thus and thus and so avoided this.

But if you take notice the scriptures that we read here from Luke, that outline what faced Jesus at Jerusalem, they were the words of Jesus Himself looking ahead at what awaited Him at Jerusalem so we cannot conclude that Jesus went to Jerusalem because He was deluded or ignorant.

What motivated Jesus steadfast journey to Jerusalem?

I'd like to answer that question here in the third part of the message.

The Hebrew writers says for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame. *Hebrews 12:2*.

What motivated Jesus to go to Jerusalem?

Again I would name four things.

First was the Father's approval.

Jesus on a number of occasions indicated that He was doing what He did because the Father asked it of Him and because He was a bit into the Father.

John 8:28: Then see Jesus unto them, When ye have lifted up the Son of man then shall you know that I am he, and that I did nothing of myself; but as my Father hath taught me, I speak these things. And he that has sent me is with me: the Father has not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him. *John 8:28-29*.

That is what motivated Jesus to go to Jerusalem.

His commitment of obedience to the Father and nothing could swerve Him aside from that.

Secondly: Another thing that motivated Jesus journey to Jerusalem was the fulfilment of the prophets' witness.

In *Luke chapter 18* that we just read a bit ago Jesus said that in going to Jerusalem and facing all those things all things that are written by the prophets concerning the Son of man shall be accomplished and then following His death and resurrection in *Luke 24* I see this cause with his disciples; He showed to them how that His life and ministry and suffering and death and resurrection were all a fulfilment of all that the Old Testament prophets, all that the Old Testament had foreshadowed. That is what motivated Jesus to go to Jerusalem.

Thirdly: Jesus I believe was also motivated to return to Jerusalem by the prospect of returning to glory.

Again there in Luke 24 as Jesus challenged the disciples, verse 26: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into his glory? *Luke 24:26*.

And in Revelation 3 Jesus refers to himself as having overcome and having sat down at my Father's throne. So that prospect motivated Jesus to go to Jerusalem.

Fourthly: But the real crux of Jesus steadfast journey to Jerusalem includes you and me this morning.

The thing that motivated Jesus to go to Jerusalem was the prospect of providing redemption for mankind. Jesus said in John 10 in the context of Himself as the good Shepherd that the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. *John 10:11*.

First Timothy one verse 15 Paul says: This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief. *1 Timothy 1:15*.

Jesus was able to journey steadfastly to Jerusalem because He saw His death not as an end in itself but as the ultimate key to a plan that He and Father had agreed upon before the foundation of the world and His death on the cross was the decisive culminating leg of a journey that began when He allowed Himself to become a man.

That light affliction which was but for a moment was for Jesus a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. (*2 Corinthians 4:7*).
Well that was Jesus.

In light of this passage that is before us in Luke nine I would like to conclude by reading the words of a hymn.

One of the brethren at home involved in the work of preparing a new hymnal said to another brother that we need songs relating to discipleship and this is what he wrote in response to that challenge.

Who calls himself a Christian must
Like Christ continue to the end;
When once his hand puts to the plough,
He turns not back for foe or friend
But keeps his solemn vow.

He follows where his Master walked,
A path of joyful rigor made,
From blush of morning to dying ray,
He helps the young, the weak, afraid,
His neighbours round his way.

And Christ's disciple covets not the charms of affluent estate
But on his altar daily lays the god of mammon
With its bait and all its fleshly ways.

The Christian like his Lord ascends the night time slopes,
To intercede for those who shoulders never bore
The yoke that Christ made light indeed,
And who His cross would scorn.

Like Christ, his Lord and Master who endured the cross
Despised the shame and prized the joy beyond the sky,
The Christian shunning ease and fame,
Upon his cross will die.

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